The

# Non-Subscribing Presbyterian.

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## Notes of the Month.

AS our readers will observe a great deal of our space this month is devoted to the reports of the Inaugural Meetings of The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The meetings we believe to be of such great importance that we have endeavoured as far as possible to give a verbatim report of the addresses delivered on that occasion. We specially call attention to Dr. Campbell's address which contains an interesting account of the origin and development of our Presbyterianism; and also to Principal Gordon's remarks on the significance and value of association. We desire also to call attention to one unfortunate omission—no mention was made of what was one of the chief objects of the Re-organisation Scheme, the establishment of a Sustentation Fund. That such a fund is urgently needed no one will deny who knows anything of the conditions of many of our congregations in the North of Ireland. It is essential, therefore, that there should be as little delay as possible in starting the fund and in soliciting the generous support of the members of our Church.

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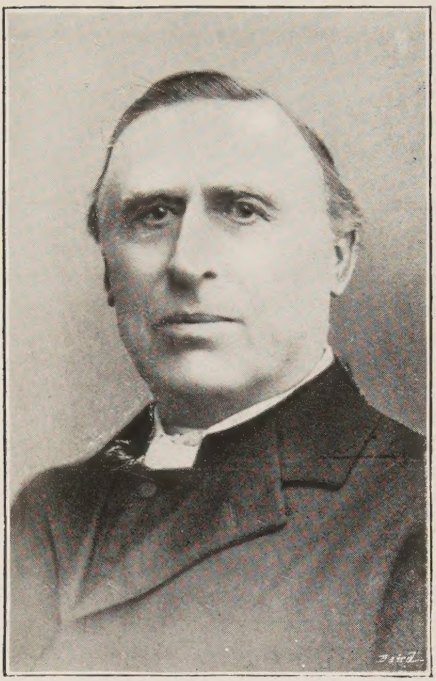
The meetings were on the whole well attended; in the evening the body of the church was comfortably full. But we noticed, and we should like to emphasise this fact, that the evening meeting was composed for the most part of the members of our Belfast congregations. We should have liked to see a larger representation of our country congregations present. This is to be accounted for to some extent by the fact of the difficulty of returning home from Belfast in the evening; but we fear it is also due to our country congregations not having fully realised the significance of the step we have taken. In other words, there is need for a deeper realisation in our country congregations of the fact that they are now part of a united Church, and that this Church has a definite claim upon their loyalty, affection and support.

Don't waste life in doubts and fears; spend yourself on the work before you, well-assured that the right performance of this hour's duties will be the best preparation for the hours of ages that follow it.—*Emerson.*

## Inauguration of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.



REV. WILLIAM NAPIER
(*First Moderator of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.*)

Proceedings in connection with the inauguration of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland took place on Thursday, 24th February, in the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast, at 12 o'clock. Divine service was conducted by the Rev. W. Napier, Clough, which was attended by representatives of most of our congregations in the North of Ireland.

### THE SERMON.

"Old things are passed away: behold all things are become new."—*II. Cor. v.* 17.

[*An excerpt from the Sermon preached by the Rev. William Napier in the First Presbyterian Church, Belfast, 24th February, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.*]

THE position of the early Church as set forth in these words of St. Paul is somewhat analogous to that which we occupy now, with this exception, that we have not left behind us any of the religious tenets which we heretofore professed but have only revised our ecclesiastical policy, and instead of being scattered congregations or groups of congregations meeting in a voluntary Association, whose decisions did not carry with them the force of law, we are now for the first time in our existence a united Christian Church corporately established. Just 184 years ago the Presbytery of Antrim was expelled from the General Synod of Ulster on the ground of objecting to sign the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. This act of severity, however, did not crush the spirit of Non-Subscription, but it lulled it to rest for many years, when after a lapse of more than a century it broke out again and afforded those two oratorical gladiators, Doctors Cooke and Montgomery, an opportunity of displaying their intellectual strength; but their hard-fought battles ended in the exclusion of the Non-Subscribers as it had done in the case of their predecessors, the Presbytery of Antrim, in 1829, when seventeen ministers with their congregations withdrew from the Synod on conscientious grounds and subsequently formed themselves into the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster.

Now one would have thought that these two small bodies, holding the same ecclesiastical views, professing the same religious faith, and proscribed by the General Synod of Ulster for the same shortcomings, would have been glad to join their forces—which only numbered twenty-five congregations—and fought side by side for the promulgation of principles dear to them both; but it was not to be, and I never heard even a plausible explanation of their electing to remain apart. Clearly, however, they had no faith in the old adage that union is strength. But after the lapse of some few years, finding that isolation was prejudicial to the interests of both, they agreed to the formation of the late Non-Subscribing Association, in which they were joined by the members of the Synod of Munster. Matters went on harmoniously for many years, the meetings were pleasant and often edifying, giving the promise of as much success as an association so constituted could be expected to yield. Clouds, however, began to gather overhead presaging evil days, and unfortunately the presage was justified by the result; but it would be unkind to lift the curtain. Suffice it to say migrations from one Presbytery to another took place, and some societies took refuge in Congregationalism; that the boundaries of the Association were enlarged to admit those ministers and congregations who had forfeited their right of membership, and that it thereby lost its specially Presbyterian character.

It became clear to every member of our churches who attended its annual meetings that the Non-Subscribing Association was gradually losing its hold on the interest and affection of our people and that if it was to regain its old position in their esteem it must be reconstructed on wiser and better principles. This feeling was naturally gathering

strength, and many ministers and laymen began to yearn for a return of better days, but no one seemed to see his way to take the initiative. It was reserved for a layman, Dr. Campbell, to undertake this honourable work, and no one could be better qualified for the task. His eminence in his profession, his zeal for his ancestral faith, and the liberal traditions of his family, all pointed him out as a man eminently fitted to take the lead in this movement, and well has he done the duty which he volunteered to perform. Both by tongue and pen he impressed on ministers and people the crying need of organisation. His own zeal in the good cause called out and animated the zeal of others. The seed which he sowed fell on good ground, and accordingly a committee composed of ministers and earnest laymen, after much thought and toil ungrudgingly given, have issued the new Constitution of our Church, which has happily secured the unanimous approval of all our congregations. This result must be gratifying alike to Dr. Campbell and the Committee of Revision, as it ought to be to one and all of us ; and surely not the least pleasing feature in the case is the fact that quite half of our ministers from across the Channel coming amongst us imbued with congregational feeling and more or less biassed against our Presbyterian forms, should have heartily joined in this movement. It shows that they have emancipated themselves from ancient prejudices and have come to learn the truth that our modified Presbyterian system is not hostile to liberty, while it promotes friendly co-operation and united effort, and that whatever they may have heard to the contrary was not according to knowledge. Fifty-five years of experience ought to count for something, and I can conscientiously declare that I never knew a minister who had the slightest reason to complain of the action of his co-Presbyters against him, and that anything like tyranny is utterly out of the question. It could not be from the very nature of the system. But now that we rejoice at the happy issue of the good work so well begun—and I do rejoice with joy unfeigned—it behoves laity and clergy alike to rise up to a due sense of their responsibilities and to see to it that our new Church may be not only a guardian of Christian liberty, but also a Church of Christ "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" the Master himself being "the chief corner stone." I do not believe that our freedom is in the least imperilled, but I do dread the encroachments of rationalism run mad and gross materialism on our pure and simple Christianity, and I hope that our reverence for Jesus Christ may rouse us to such a pitch of enthusiasm as will guard us from falling away from our faith in him and make us his freemen, for then we shall be free indeed.

Divine service was followed immediately by the administration of the Lord's Supper, conducted by the Rev. W. Napier, assisted by the Revs. J. Kennedy and H. J. Rossington.

At the conclusion of this service, the congregation resolved itself into a business meeting, and on the motion of Rev. Alex. Gordon, seconded by Rev. T. Dunkerley, the Rev. W. Napier was appointed first Moderator of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The appointment of Rev. J. A. Kelly, Clerk, and Mr. John Rogers, Treasurer, with a *pro tem.* General Purposes Committee, concluded the meeting of the first session.

## EVENING MEETING.

At 7-30 o'clock, same evening, an Organ Recital was given in the First Church by Mr. A. Davis, F.R.C.O., and at 8 o'clock Rev. W. Napier took the chair. After singing the fine old hymn, "All people that on earth do dwell," Rev. H. J. Rossington intimated that apologies for non-attendance had been received from Revs. W. H. Drummond and Dr. Mellone and the Rt. Hon. Justice Andrews, all of whom wished success to the meeting and the Church.

The Chairman then called upon the Rev. Principal Gordon to address the meeting.

## PRINCIPAL GORDON'S ADDRESS.

In the course of an interesting address, Mr. Gordon said it was a privilege and pleasure to be permitted to address to them a few words on that auspicious occasion. He thought the keynote of that meeting and of the movement for which it stood might be expressed in one word, Consolidation : it was a movement for that security which came of cohesion. They might be asked, perhaps reasonably, why this movement had been so long delayed ? There had been endeavours towards it in years past, but the time was not ripe. At different periods, and in different localities, the Unitarian faith had inspired various movements. In England at the present time the movement which was running successfully might be called a movement of propagandism. But their movement was somewhat different, and he ventured to say that it was essentially of a deeper quality. There were various sorts of progress, one of which was numerical progress ; he did not despise this kind, for it meant that private judgment was receiving the support of public judgment. But numerical progress was not necessarily progress of the highest and deepest sort. Opinions were valuable according to their fruitfulness. Some opinions bore no fruit in character and life. But the complex of beliefs which they spoke of in the mass under the title of Unitarian faith created a type of character which was recognised beyond their own borders as having its worth, at any rate, in the affairs of this world. Let them remember that this world was God's world, and was the only world of

God of which they knew anything ; though indeed they looked forward to a higher and better. In this country they had an advantage in their congregations over the congregations in England, *i.e.*, the congregations in Ireland had roots old and deeply struck. He was a great believer in the hereditary principle. In this country they could look back to an ancestry and not ignoble past. Families here were rooted in the soil for generations. Presbyterianism as they were taking it to-day bound congregations together into a body. They came together, then, for mutual help, mutual forbearance and mutual learning. A wise man had said that the Lord's saying " Love your enemy " was hard, but the injunction " Love your neighbour " was harder, for the enemy was often a long way off, but the neighbour was usually next door. Association with men taught them that there were other points of view besides their own and gave them respect for other people's opinions. Mutual understanding, mutual charity, mutual helpfulness all joined together—that he conceived to be the key-note of their meeting and their movement. But some would ask—What became of their freedom if they thus subordinated their individual peculiarities ? Freedom was a very favourite expression amongst Unitarians. But " free " was a relative term. Free from what ? He ventured to say that the very best and most needful sort of freedom for moral and religious men could only be secured by co-operation. For what was the highest kind of freedom ? It was freedom from self. There were those, and they were often good men, who were bound within the limits of their own hide—who saw everything from an individual and a peculiar point of view. But when they associated with others they came to see that theirs was not the only point of view ; there came to them an expansion both of idea and of soul when they were thus freed from the individual limitations of their natures. Linked together, they were not only stronger as a body but really freer in the highest sense in their own individualities. He reminded them of the words of the poet—

"Free yet in chains the mountains stand."

So might they stand.

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## DR. CAMPBELL'S ADDRESS.

Dr. Campbell said that the present movement was not new. In a sense nothing they did was new; it was all a part of the great process of evolution. That meeting had its roots in events of some hundreds of years ago. It was natural at a time like that to look back and to look forward. With the future he should not deal except to wish that the movement might prove to be stimulating to both old and young to be and to do something worthy of their great traditions.

Dr. Campbell then said :—At a time like the present it is natural that the mind should turn to the past and to the future. We cannot look back into the past without glancing across to Scotland from which our ancestors, with their Presbyterianism, for the most part came. When we do look back one of the first things that attracts our attention is the movement known as the Lollard movement, and, in particular, that portion of it which interested those natives of Ayrshire who were known as the " Lollards of Kyle." In the year 1494, the Lollards of Kyle uplifted the flag of the Reformation, and drew down upon their heads the condemnation of papal supremacy. One of their chief contentions was that God " is not only in heaven, but also on the earth," and so stoutly did they defend their position when brought to trial that they were acquitted of the charges brought against them and escaped the scaffold. From this time forward for two generations the Protestant Reformation progressed, and in 1560 we find that the Scottish Confession of Faith was drawn up. Considering the age in which it came into existence this old and almost forgotten creed, which marks the firm establishment of Scottish Presbyterianism, was a wonderfully advanced exposition of theological thought. " Drawn up in haste by a small number of theologians, it is more sympathetic and human than most creeds, and has commended itself to many who object to the impersonal logic of the Westminster Confession " (Prof. Lindsay). The whole spirit of the Scottish Confession is shown in the following extract from it :—" . . . We ought not sa meikle to luke what men before us have said or done, as unto that quhilk the Haly Ghaist uniformelie speakes within the body of the Scriptures, and unto that quhilk Christ Jesus himselfe did, and commanded to be done." The Scottish Confession " remained the symbol of the Church of Scotland during the first stormy century of its existence. It was displaced by the Westminster Confession in 1647, only on the understanding that the later document was ' in nothing contrary ' to the former ; and continued authoritative long after that date " (Prof. Lindsay). I have somewhat dwelt upon the character of this Scottish Confession because the people who colonised the North of Ireland, and particularly the counties of Antrim and Down, settled in this country between the years 1620 and 1690. They were, therefore, Scottish Presbyterians who had been brought up under the influence of this old Scottish Confession, and who were imbued with the religious ideas which it contains. In Scotland the Westminster Confession was, for political reasons, forced upon the Scottish people, and in course of time gradually extinguished all knowledge of the existence of the Old Confession. It is true that, for many years after 1647, the old creed held its place in the hearts and lives of the people in spite

of the official position of the Westminster Confession, but ultimately it became completely supplanted by the later Westminster Confession. That the memory of the old creed should have been hard to kill is natural, seeing that it came into existence during a time of severe trial, difficulty and danger for the Reformers, and considering that the rival by which it was supplanted and suppressed was not of native Scottish manufacture, but was prepared in England by an Assembly of divines appointed by the Long Parliament, for settling the doctrine and government of the Church of England. This Assembly originally consisted of 151 members, of whom only six were representatives of the Church of Scotland. Hence we find ourselves to-day in the curious position of having a creed drawn up for the Church of England, chiefly by members of the Church of England, taken over by the Presbyterians of Scotland and by their cousins in Ireland, and adopted in preference to the fine old Scottish Confession which it superseded. Hard as the memory of the old Confession was to blot out in Scotland, it was still more difficult to extinguish it in Ireland. Political necessity did not enforce the adoption of the new creed by Irish Presbyterians of two hundred years ago, and so they were for a long time content to remain in the same position as their fathers and grandfathers who had been reared under the Old Confession. Gradually the old creed became forgotten, or it fell into disuse, and in proportion as the influence of the old one waned that of the new one became greater, until finally the majority of Irish Presbyterians, having forgotten the Old Scottish Confession of Knox and the early Reformers, were content to accept the Westminster Confession as their creed. Thus in Ireland in 1830 a Confession of Faith, which had been drawn up by English divines, for the English Church, became the creed of Irish Presbyterianism, just as the same Confession had in 1647 become the creed of Scottish Presbyterianism. One hundred and eighty-three years had elapsed before Ireland decided voluntarily to follow the path into which Scotland had been politically driven. Although the letter of the old creed had been forgotten the spirit of it still remained and animated a considerable number of the descendants of the original Presbyterian settlers in Ireland. The earliest Presbyterian congregations were (1) Ballycarry: Edward Brice, minister in 1613; (2) Holywood: Robert Cunningham, minister, 1615; (3) Antrim: John Ridge, minister, 1619; (4) Bangor: Robert Blair, minister, 1623; (5) Ballywalter: James Hamilton, minister; (6) Carrickfergus, Mr. Hubbard, minister, 1621; (7) Templepatrick; Josias Welsh, minister, 1622; (8) Donegore: Andrew Stewart, minister, 1627; (9) Larne: George Dunbar, minister; (10) Killinchy: John Livingston, A.M., minister, 1630.

Ballycarry, Holywood, Antrim, Templepatrick, Larne and Killinchy have remained Non-Subscribing congregations. It is a remarkable testimony to the powers of endurance of the spirit of ancient Scottish Presbyterianism that of the ten original Presbyterian settlements in Ireland, six opposed the introduction of the Westminster Confession. This spirit, passed down through three centuries and a half, has brought us here to-night. We are not all descendants of the hardy men of the North who came to take up the position of an unarmed garrison in Ulster, but many of us are. The history of our race tells us that the path of the reformer is hard, and has always been hard, but still we maintain with ancient Scottish Confession that "we ought not sa meikle to luke what men before us have said or done, as unto that quhilk the haly Ghaist uniformelie speakes within the body of the Scriptures, and unto that quhilk Christ Jesus himselfe did, and commanded to be done."

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THE RIGHT HON. THOMAS ANDREWS was then called upon to address the meeting. He congratulated the Chairman on his election as First Moderator of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. He desired also to congratulate those who were present at the mid-day meeting on its success, and regretted his inability to be with them. He need not tell them the deep debt of gratitude which their Church owed to Dr. Campbell, and it was probable that but for his exertions they would not be assembled there that night. He looked upon it as a great work, the successful accomplishment of which they were now celebrating in uniting their scattered congregations in Ireland into one body. Their Church was essentially Presbyterian and always had been so; it was the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, and the word Non-Subscribing simply meant that they could not subscribe to the doctrines of orthodox Presbyterians. They believed in an open Bible, and that man beginning to study that great book should be unfettered by dogmas or creeds, and that if he was fond of doctrines he should form his own from that book. They could have true freedom on no others terms. Many orthodox people did not believe the doctrines set forth in the creeds of their Churches, and it was matter for congratulation that Non-Subscribers were not called upon to occupy such a position. He rejoiced that bigotry had largely disappeared; such samples as occasionally occurred were so small that they could afford to disregard. He wished the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland all success, and he said all honour to those who had worked nobly in bringing the different units of the Church together.

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THE REV. H. J. ROSSINGTON in responding to a vote of thanks, proposed by Rev. T. Dunkerley, for the use of the First

Church, the services of the Choir and Organist, took the opportunity of saying that he looked with confidence to the future. He spoke of the importance of instructing the young in the traditions of their Church, and said they were consolidating not in a spirit of antagonism to other Churches but in order that their own Church should do even better work than in the past. Let them put away indifference and lethargy. Because freedom had been won for them let them not think lightly of it, but do all they could to labour for God and man.

The meeting closed with the singing of a hymn and the Benediction.

## A PLEA FOR TOTAL ABSTINENCE.

BY REV. J. JOSEPH MAGILL, B.A.

*(President of the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians.*

THE Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland is now an accomplished fact. Our best wishes go forth to it as it stands at the beginning of its career. Its creation has yet to be justified, and, needless to say, this can only be done by the work of a religious and social nature, undertaken and in due course carried to a successful issue. From no field of labour is the call to come and help louder or more likely to yield good results than that of Temperance. Indeed, from this standpoint the inauguration of the new Church has been most opportune. It coincides with a revival of interest in the great cause of Temperance which is making itself felt throughout the whole of Ireland. But this new movement is not only on the side of Temperance as generally understood, but is definitely and distinctly identified with total abstinence. In work of such a beneficial nature, our Church ought to occupy a position in the front rank. If we fail to do so, the reproach will be deep and ineradicable. There are amongst us both the men and the enthusiasm. If any essential to success be wanting, it is unanimity. If we could agree to speak in one voice, and one voice only, on this important question, I am certain we should be gratified with the sight of a large harvest following on our efforts. With a view to lead towards closer agreement amongst our members, I humbly offer one or two thoughts for the serious consideration of our people, both clerical and lay.

First : Total abstinence is supported by the results of the latest scientific research. The change that has come about within recent years in the attitude of the medical profession towards alcohol is very striking. In most cases the ordinary practitioner is still bound by the traditions of his calling. But the leading doctors have found it necessary to re-consider the claims of alcohol. The testimony of the most eminent surgeons and physicians is conclusive as to the poisonous nature of the drug, and proves that it is hurtful to the human system even in small quantities ; that it cannot be regarded as a food, and that even as a medicine its usefulness is doubtful. In support of this somewhat sweeping assertion, the names of Sir Frederick Treves, Professor Sims Woodhead, Sir Victor Horsley and others may be quoted.

Dr. Addinsell, Physician to the London Temperance Hospital, speaking of his own experience some time ago, said : " It has convinced me for all time that the administration of alcohol is unnecessary in the treatment of disease. Nay, more ; I am prepared to say that the administration of alcohol in many instances not only may, but even does, aggravate the trouble for which it is administered."

There was a time, happily long past, when the writer who invited his readers to forego altogether the use of alcohol might have been troubled with doubts as to the effects on their health of the course recommended. No such fear need disturb the mind of anyone to-day. Belief in the virtue of strong drink may be relegated to the same region as belief in the flatness of the earth, and all the other exploded opinions and superstitions which once held the mind in thraldom, but whose sway science has destroyed for ever.

Secondly : Total abstinence increases greatly personal influence. Experience teaches that, whatever else may be said

in favour of moderation, it cannot be described as possible for the weak. The strong may rejoice in their strength, but the weak must either shun alcohol altogether or go to excess. The confirmed drunkard is seldom reformed by any means, but of those instances which we have known we do not think the result was in any case owing to moderation. He is continually setting that ideal before himself in his sober moments, but the taste of spirituous liquor scatters his resolve to the winds, and he becomes helpless. His repeated failures to practise moderation discourage him, and he loses heart and hope.

Will not the example and sympathy of a total abstainer place before him a road which is both easier and safer? The craving will not gain the mastery so readily when that which excites it is kept away entirely. An appeal which takes something like this shape is very powerful when addressed to one who is conscious of being in a bad way: "Come with me, and be an abstainer; I know from experience it is a good thing. I never touch strong drink myself." No one will venture to deny that you are more likely to succeed with the drunkard in that way than when you merely say to him: "Why don't you sign the pledge, and leave drink alone?" and then on his retorting that you do not practise what you preach, you reply: "Oh, I have no need; I can take a glass or let it alone." In our opinion, the abstainer will accomplish better results in dealing with those who go to excess than the moderate drinker can reasonably hope to do.

And now as regards children and alcohol: the little ones should not be allowed to make its acquaintance at all. On this point there is only one opinion held by enlightened people of the present day. But if the children have reason to believe that those who urge them to abstain are themselves fond of a glass of wine, will they not naturally conclude that alcohol is one of the great pleasures of adult life withheld from them?

The abstainer has undoubtedly an advantage in this most important department of Temperance work. He explains to the children the extent of the evil caused by the use of strong drink: he points out that according to the latest teaching alcohol is a poison which is injurious to the body and cannot be taken with safety; he makes clear how much greater their chances of health, happiness and success will be if they follow total abstinence as their rule of life; and he proves his sincerity and consistency by letting them know that he never touches strong drink in any form himself. The good impression which his words and example make will probably remain with some of his hearers till death.

For these, and other reasons which space will not permit me to discuss, total abstinence demands our most serious consideration. There is a great work to be done. We are called to take our part. Let us willingly respond, grateful that we are privileged to work with God in the interest of the rising generation, and of enslaved humanity.

### DEDICATION.

Set wide the gate of liberty
For all to enter in,
That all, set free, at last may see
The golden age begin.

Too long the captive people wait
In sorrow and in sin;
At last, though late, set wide the gate
And let their joy begin.

The temple of our God is wide,
All faiths of man akin;
Here, side by side, let all abide
Till perfect love begin.

Here may the weary find a rest,
The worker courage win,
And east and west, together blest,
Full brotherhood begin.

In love and truth to God and man,
Whate'er the past has been,
The task our Master once began
Once more let us begin.

To bless the rich, to bless the poor,
To still the strife and din,
For evermore, set wide the door
Till heaven on earth begin.

*W. G. Tarrant.*

## SUNDAY MORNING SOLILOQUIES OF HEZEKIAH GOODENOUGH.

RECORDED BY REV. W. S. SMITH.

### THE A 1 THEOLOGICAL PUZZLE.

" Multiplication is vexation,
Division is as bad ;
The Rule of Three, it puzzles me,
But Theology drives me mad."

HAVE I correctly quoted the words of the old rhyme ? They seem queer. Am I getting muddled, like Theology ? I have rubbed my forehead until it is sore, and probed my eyes with my fingers until I have seen fireworks, but little real light has been thrown upon this wonderful doctrine of the Trinity. I cannot see through it, nor " divide " it. All the parts stick so close together, run into and overlap each other—three in one and one in three, the first last and the last first; the middle first, last and middle at the same time—it is impossible to divide it. There are many puzzles in the popular theology, but this one of the Trinity is the capper. It stands A1 in the list. That theological jingle I cut out of a newspaper describes it as well as I ever saw it described. Let me read it again :—

" That three are one and one is three
Is an idea which puzzles me.
By many a learned sage 'tis said
That three are one in the Godhead.
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
Are three at least, and one at most.
The Father, then, may be the Son,
For both together make but one ;
The Son, likewise, may be the Father,
Without the slightest change of either ;
Yea, and the blessed Spirit be
Father, Son and Trinity.
This is a creed of Christian folks
Who call themselves true orthodox."

But it is of no use. I cannot understand it. If men nurse their troubles as I nurse theology they are to be pitied.

When a man can be shown me riding down our lane in three different carts at once, and yet only in one cart ; or wheeling three different barrows, and yet only wheeling one ; or holding on to three separate ploughs, and yet holding on to one only, then there may be some hope of seeing the Trinity realistically illustrated.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the *Athanasian Creed* both, but especially the latter, contain some extraordinary and puzzling statements about the Trinity. But though they are uttered in all seriousness, and though the *Creed* threatens me with annihilation if I do not accept its statements, yet I am unable to do so. I cannot even understand them, and I don't believe a Doctor of Divinity could either. We should not trust them for guidance too much. I would rather trust Jesus Christ. Religion is a personal concern, and not the property of a limited liability company. It is I who am to believe unto righteousness, and not another for me. But if belief in the Trinity—oh, dear, that dreadful Trinity—is to be one of the conditions of my getting to heaven, as the *Athanasian Creed* intimates, why—then—then—Hezekiah Goodenough will never get there. He will be like " Holy Willie " of pious and immortal memory. His soul will take the left-hand road. And if I can't help it, I can't. To damn a man who won't believe is cruel enough ; but to damn one who can't is a powerful sight worse.

I am seriously enjoined to " worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity ; neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one : the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible."—— But where have I got to ? Am I in the middle of next week ? Dear me ! I fear the room is turning round. If not, my poor brain is—Trinity, Unity, incomprehensibles, eternals, Gods and Holy Ghosts ! I am confusing the substances, confounding the persons, and shall be lost ! If I take not all in, I am a doomed man. What must I do ? Let me try and bring myself to once more.

Yes ; I see. Last Sunday was Christmas Day, and—and—next Sunday will be Good Friday. Oh dear ! I can neither see nor feel my way through this theological maze, and I am almost ready to challenge any doctor of divinity to a duel who says he can. Yet I am a lost miserable sinner for not being able to hold this "Catholic Faith." Oh, this "Catholic Faith." I would there were something more reliable than it to look to for guidance and inspiration.

But I might say, with some of the theologians, " To the law and the testimony." What said the Master on this subject of the Trinity ? Not a single word. God to him was not a Trinity in Unity, not a Trinity of Almighties, Eternals and Incomprehensibles. No ; God to him was One. " The Lord our God is one Lord," said he. I cannot recall a single instance where any utterance of Christ's is capable of suggesting in the remotest manner the idea of a plurality of persons in the Divine Being. But some systematic theologians, doctors of divinity, and bishops, have improved upon Christ in this respect. While elaborating theories for the benefit of

their admirers, they have got mystified and muddled. They have been wise above what is written, and I am one of the sufferers by it. I do not think this fair. After all, a good conscience is better than popular favour.

I shall do my best to stick to the teaching of the Master. Though no professor of systematic theology, I feel he is the safest I can turn to for help. And I find no idea, as I have said, of plurality in his references and appeals to God. There is no invocation of a Trinity in the words—"Our Father who art in heaven," nor in those uttered shortly before his crucifixion—"This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He certainly did once say he and His Father were one, but he never once said he and his Father were three. It is, however, explained fully in the XVIIth chapter of John's Gospel in what sense, which is anything but Trinitarian, he and the Father were one. There is certainly one passage in the New Testament which seems to imply that God is three. Let me see if I can find it. Yes; here it is in the First Epistle of John, 5th chapter, and 7th verse. The *Westminster Confession of Faith*, I see, refers its adherents to this verse as one of its proof texts for the doctrine of the Trinity. The passage reads—"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Pretty stiff, this—something like a Trinity in Unity here. But these are not the words of Jesus Christ. I doubt if they are the words of John, the writer of the Epistle. Sir Isaac Newton did not believe they were, and wrote a treatise to prove they were not. Other scholars have held his views and followed in his footsteps.

But let me see what those wise men of Westminster have said in the Revised Version of the New Testament, issued in 1881. Why, what is the matter? Wait a wee, and let me put on my spectacles, not theological ones, of course. This is strange indeed! The 7th verse there reads—"And it is the spirit that beareth witness, because the spirit is of the truth." Surely this is no translation; there is nothing about three in one here. Dear me! but it is very strange. Why, I declare the verse is not there at all! The translators have actually cut it out—annihilated the Trinity with one stroke of the pen! What will now be done! Surely the doctors and bishops will go into mourning over the lost dogmas and will cover themselves with sackcloth and ashes. When the loss is fully realised, I shall not be surprised if a proclamation to the following effect appears in the newspapers—"O yes, O yes, O yes! Lost, not far from London Bridge, some time between the years 1870 and 1881, the holy and blessed Trinity. Whoever will restore the same, pure and undefiled, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, accompanied with a warrant for its genuineness from Holy Writ, shall be handsomely rewarded with a bishop's mitre, a seat in the Upper House, the thanks of the whole Trinitarian Church, and theological immortality to boot—O yes, O yes, O yes!"

But, after all, perhaps the passage never had any business in the New Testament, and the bishops may possibly be aware of it; in which case they will not of course advertise for the restoration of the Trinity. Perhaps they believe that some designing mystery-man in the early ages foisted the passage into the text, and that its loss is no loss to truth. Anyway, if it were to be restored, I do not think it would ever be thought well of again.

But here are the young folks from meeting. Jane is calling me to dinner. I'm as hungry as a hunter, and so I think I will cease my cogitations, though this subject of the Trinity is an interminable one.

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The Fifth International Assembly of Unitarian and other Liberal religious thinkers and workers will be held this year in Germany. There is abundant evidence that in Germany itself warm interest is felt in this interesting event. Many of the foremost leaders of thought in the country will take part; and there is no doubt that the memorable series of meetings begun in London in 1901, and continued at Amsterdam, Geneva and Boston, U.S.A., will receive a noteworthy addition this year. Delegates from some twenty religious bodies will be represented, coming from all the great countries in Europe and Asia, while a very large and distinguished company of Americans will attend. The British party, which we hope will include an Irish party, will leave London on Tuesday, 2nd August. Three tours have been arranged, *viz.*, (*a*) *via* Cologne to Berlin, including Potsdam, Wittenberg and Weimar, Wartburg and Eisenach; (*b*) as in (*a*), with the addition of Munich and Oberammergau; and (*c*) an extension of (*a*) and (*b*) to Hungary. Full particulars concerning these meetings and the tours connected therewith may be obtained from the Secretary, British and Foreign Unitarian Association, Essex Hall, Essex Street, Strand, London, or from any of our ministers.

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Contentment is the root of happiness,
And discontentment the root of misery.
Would'st thou be happy, be then moderate.
*The Code of Manu.*

## REPORTS.

**Ballyclare.**—The Annual Congregational Re-union was held in the Meeting-house on January 25th. There was an excellent attendance, larger than on any similar past occasion, the bright and comfortable Meeting-house being nearly filled. During a substantial tea Rev. William Fielding gave selections on the phonograph, and Mrs. Logan occasional pieces on the piano, which were very highly appreciated by the audience. The programme of the evening consisted of the cantata "Under the Palms," by Hezekiah Butterworth, the music by G. F. Root. The occasion presented is the Jewish feast of Tabernacles, which took place after the return from the Babylonian captivity, the scene of which, with its characters and accessories, is described in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The chorus, "Wake, captives, awake!" introduced the music, and at once it was discovered that here were a choir and performers of no mean ability. A novel element in the programme, which awakened great interest and delighted everyone, was the production of the chorus, "God thy prayer now bows to hear"—by an invisible choir—the piece being sung by part of the choir in the entrance hall, the accompaniment in this case being given by Mrs. Fielding on the harmonium. The effect produced was of choristers at a long distance away. During an interval in the cantata a pleasing episode was the distribution of prizes to the Sunday-school scholars by Mrs. Fielding, which was done in a most graceful manner and with some encouraging words to each recipient. The prizes themselves were in each case handsome, and were generously provided, as in former years, by Mrs. Bulmer and Mrs. A. Logan. A pleasant evening was brought to a conclusion by all joining very heartily in singing the National Anthem.

**Clonmel: The late Mr. James Orr.**—The last rites of interment were paid on January 27th at Rathronan, near Clonmel, to the remains of the eldest son of the late Rev. James Orr, who for nearly fifty years had officiated at our place of worship in that town. Engaged all his time with farming labours, necessary at first to eke out his father's income whereupon to rear a family and help some of them to professions, James Orr, junior, had little scope for aught else than the steadfast, kindly, cheerful attention he gave to the demands of devotion upon him. Some years ago he was attacked by heart disease, but until the close of last summer he never failed, if at all able, to be present in his place of prayer. Those who, as supplies, have visited Clonmel will remember his disposition to do all in his power to make their stay a very agreeable one. He passed away on the 25th January, but for a long period previous had been looking for release from increasing infirmities. Rev. G. H. Vance, the retiring minister of Dublin, officiated at the grave, and Dr. G. Orr, of Ballylesson, near Belfast, attended, with many neighbours, who testified their sincere respect. Three sisters, Rev. R J. Orr, and a brother in Australia are left as the survivors.

**Dunmurry.**—The third successful Musical Evening was held in the Court House on Thursday, 20th January, and was well attended. Mr. Henry Oughton, presided, and the following items were performed:—Piano and violin, Miss Roberts and Mr. Arthur; songs by Miss Lily Cheshire and Miss Maude Roberts, Messrs. Kerr and Lilley. Each item was artistically rendered by the performer and appreciated by those present. Mr. Palmer gave a conjuring performance and bewildered the audience by his clever and successful feats. The Chairman (a host in himself) gave a humorous sketch. Everyone was delighted with the entertainment, and too much praise cannot be given to those who were responsible for the programme, and to Mr. John Linn for his kind attention, while a pleasing feature was the willingness of the performers (who are mostly members of other denominations) to assist again when required. Such entertainments are a source of pleasure to people in this neighbourhood, and should have every encouragement.

**Holywood.**—The monthly meeting of the Total Abstinence Society was held on Tuesday evening, February 8th, under the chairmanship of the Rev. G. Leonard Phelps. There was a good attendance, and a very enjoyable programme was provided. The speaker was the Rev. H. G. Collier, of Belfast, who gave a most vigorous address. Songs were kindly sung by Miss Murphy and Mr. Telford Hewson, and the recitations of Miss May Patterson were much enjoyed, as were the solos on the Irish pipes by Mr. Brogan.

**Newtownards: First or Old Presbyterian Church.**—On Tuesday evening, February 1st, the members of the above Church, with a number of friends, met to hold the annual business meeting and spend a pleasant evening together. After tea, supplied by Mrs. Kirk in her usual efficient manner, the chair was taken by the Rev. R. Maxwell King. In his address Mr. King congratulated the Congregation on the successful year that had just finished, and on the harmony that existed amongst them. The Secretary and Treasurer would each present their reports, which would show how zealously and carefully their Committee had carried on the business part of the congregational work. He extended a hearty welcome to all, and especially to the friends from other churches, whom they valued and rejoiced to welcome there that evening. Mr. S. Harrison then presented his report as Secretary, which was well received. Mr. James Wilson, Treasurer, read his report, which showed that the income from all sources, including the sale of securities, the Minister's Increase Fund raised by Mr. King, and the gift of £100 by Messrs. W. Ferguson and H. Ferguson, Castleavery, and James

Wilson, Ballymagreehan, was a substantial one. After re-investing these amounts and paying all accounts, they started the year with a good balance in hand. Votes of thanks were then passed to the retiring Committee, the Organist, and Choir; and, as a mark of confidence, the Committee of the last year was re-elected. Rev. Thos. Harrison, of Belfast, who had preached with great acceptance during Mr. King's enforced inaction at the time of his accident, was present and in a few well-chosen words replied to the vote of welcome proposed to the friends of other churches. During tea the strains of a splendid phonograph, kindly lent by Mr. Apperson, lent charm and brightness to the evening. The business being then concluded, Mr. King delivered a lecture on Switzerland, illustrated by splendid views. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to all who had helped and the benediction.

**Templepatrick.**—The Annual Business Meeting of the Congregation was held in the Roughfort School on Friday evening, 18th February, Rev. A. Turner presiding. A large number of the members of the Church assembled, almost every family being well represented. A few of the ladies kindly provided and dispensed an excellent tea, after which business and entertainment followed. Mr. John Moore, Secretary of the Church, read his annual report, which, owing to much extra work of one sort and another, unavoidably showed a deficit. This point was discussed, and finally it was decided, on the motion of Mr. Joseph Kell, seconded by Mr R. Thompson, that among other things we should hold a two days' sale of work in the summer of 1911. The rest of the evening was pleasantly spent, Miss Birkmyre, Miss Cassie Moore, Rev. S. E. Bowen, and Mr. Campbell contributing songs. Mr. Robert Barnes gave selections on his gramophone, and Miss Clara Birkmyre a pianoforte solo. We were indebted to Mr. John Reid for loan of piano. An excellent entertainment was brought to a close by the pronouncement of the benediction.

**Unity Guild.**—The January Meeting was held in York Street Hall on the 26th, when Rev. J. Worthington, B.A., lectured on the English Lake District. The cold snap coupled with the reaction of election excitement mitigated against the attendance, which was a fact to be deplored. The lecturer touched on some of the more prominent features of the district, and also gave instructive accounts of the association with it of Wordsworth and De Quincey. A number of interesting slides helped to make the lecture attractive, and in this respect it is to be regretted that owing to shortage in the gas supply the lecturer had to bring his remarks to an abrupt conclusion.

The February Meeting was held in York Street Hall on the 16th, Rev. J. A. Kelly presiding. Owing to the very inclement night, there was unfortunately only a somewhat sparse attendance to hear Mr. J. H. Gilliland open a discussion on "The Unemployed Question." In the course of an able and lucid address, the opener remarked that this question had assumed a national basis in the past few years, and that it was a permanent feature irrespective of the state of trade. Diagnosing it for cause, he was inclined to think that same was brought about partly by the cornering of wealth—one-ninth of the population taking half the national income, and thereby in the long run causing the existence of inability to purchase by the masses. To overcome this, systemisation, or well thought out State aid, seemed the only solution, and as a first step he suggested a Government Department, with a Minister of Labour at its head. He advocated the abolition of the workhouse, and compulsory registration at Labour Exchanges with a graduated system of farm colonies, which would train men and pass them on to higher grades as they showed proficiency. Reafforestation and canal schemes he thought desirable means to an end, whilst insurance against unemployment might be effected with the aid of the trades unions. Better education from both a primary and technical standpoint, the re-arrangement of taxation generally, which should include the taxation of land values and big monopolies, and a progressive income-tax he deemed desirable as aids to the solution of the difficulties. On the question of paying for the cost of the various schemes put forward, he opined that it would be cheaper in the long run to foot the bill as the unemployed had to be kept in some manner at the moment. In the course of the discussion that followed, as was perhaps to be expected, the question as to the bearing on this vital question of the rival schemes of Free Trade and Tariff Reform loomed rather largely, and the proceedings consequently attained a fair degree of liveliness. By either the asking of questions or the airing of their views, contributions to the proceedings were made by the Chairman, Rev. J. Worthington, B.A.; Messrs. Scott, Hill, Robinson, Roberts and Jackson.

Manners are the ornament of action, and there is a way of speaking a kind word, or of doing a kind thing, which greatly enhances its value. What seems to be done with a grudge, or as an act of condescension, is scarcely accepted as a favour.—*S. Smiles.*

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